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ABSTRACT

This journal issue consists of articles and other information about immigration issues, as well as discussions of the utility of racial and ethnic categories. "An International Perspective on Migration" (Cathi Tactaquin) examines the intertwined economic, political, and environmental causes of international migration; discusses how development policies such as North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) ignore labor flows across borders; and suggests that anti-immigrant measures such as California's Proposition 187 respond simplistically to heightened intolerance; and suggests that migration is an international issue, a manifestation of uneven social, political and economic development and conflict that requires cooperation and collective action among countries and regions. "Immigration and the Civil Rights Movement's Response" (Bill Tamayo) examines the racist elements of anti-immigrant policies and calls for civil rights groups to come together and forcefully articulate the issues involved. "Latino Immigrants in Los Angeles: A Portrait from the 1990 Census" (David Hayes-Bautista, Werner Schink, Gregory Rodriguez) summarizes data on Latino immigrants in Los Angeles County, including census count, estimates of undocumented immigrants, labor force participation, use of public assistance, education, and family characteristics; and compares these new immigrants to immigrant Anglos of an earlier era. "Job Competition between Immigrants & African Americans" (Paul Ong, Abel Valenzuela, Jr.) focuses on the impact of immigration on the joblessness and earnings among black males in Los Angeles County between the ages of 18 and 24, and 18 and 64 with no more than a high school education. Also included in this issue are four perspectives on the meaning of racial and ethnic categories and their uses in the census and other data collection, in federal policies and programs, and as a focus for political and social organizing; a quiz "Immigration: Myths & Facts"; a list of immigrant rights organizations; and a bibliography of materials criticizing "The Bell Curve: (Murray-Herrnstein). (LP)

ED 385 403

# FOCUS ON IMMIGRATION

POVERTY & RACE NEWSLETTER
MARCH/APRIL 1995
VOLUME 4: NUMBER 2

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PRRAC

# Poverty & Race

POVERTY & RACE RESEARCH ACTION COUNCIL

*March/April 1995* *Volume 4: Number 2*

## An International Perspective on Migration

by Cathi Tactaquin

There are over 100 million migrants (immigrants and refugees) in the world today. This unprecedented level has prompted widespread concern about the causes and consequences of international migration. Although the United Nations General Assembly recently has taken steps to convene an international conference on migration and development, migrant-receiving countries such as the United States are developing national immigration policies that may seriously jeopardize the basic human rights and economic survival of this growing population.

The United States receives less than 1% of the world's migrants on an annual basis. Nonetheless, it has responded to the international crisis in migration by cracking down on undocumented immigrants, tightening border controls, restricting access to political asylum, and threatening immigrant access to public assistance programs. Most policy makers are quick to pander to racist and xenophobic fears and claims that immigration has become a primary source of this country's economic instability.

Despite the ever-increasing volume of restrictions and resources devoted to immigration, these measures have had little, if any, impact on the sources and patterns of international migration.

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This issue of *P&R* focusses on immigration: an international perspective on America's "problem"; the myths and the facts (in quiz form); the civil rights movement's response to this issue; a portrait of Latino immigrants (from Los Angeles County), offering important data on their characteristics, labor force participation, use of public assistance, education, family life, and how these new immigrants compare with in-migrant Anglos of an earlier era; and an important, data-driven (and likely controversial) discussion of the issue of jobs competition between immigrants and Blacks. As usual, we welcome comments from readers and will consider continuing coverage in forthcoming issues.

In our May/June issue, we plan to focus on affirmative action; we solicit your ideas for what to cover, whom to request articles from, and your own offers to contribute.

*Poverty & Race* now goes out to some 7,300 readers.

Finally, we welcome our new Assistant Director, Steven White (see p. 23), and offer our deep appreciation to Joe Lucero for his first-rate work over the last year and a half, as well as our best wishes for his new life in the Big Apple.

Chester Hartman
Executive Director

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## Sources of International Migration

Historically, some factors have consistently influenced migration flows, but dramatic political and economic changes over the last decade have produced new migrant populations and patterns that defy "traditional" immigration controls and have led to a widespread belief that international migration has indeed reached crisis proportions. Many experts consider it one of the most significant global issues of our time, reflecting economic and societal failures to provide adequate jobs and shelter, environmental protection and the preservation of basic human rights.

The root causes of international migration are several and often intertwined, so that traditional categories, such as labor migration, family reunification or asylum-seeking, are no longer clear-cut:

- **Economic:** While economics is a major cause of displacement, migrants who come from impoverished conditions are likely to have been affected by other factors, including political and social unrest not formally acknowledged as endangering human rights conditions.
- **Political:** Most of today's refugees are fleeing conditions of generalized violence and hostilities rather than individual persecution. Most current conflicts are taking place within countries rather than between them.
- **Environmental:** Millions of people have been displaced because the land they live on has become toxic or is unable to support them. While some conditions are the result of natural disasters, much environmental degradation is caused by humans—national and multinational business interests that disregard protections or purposely ravage natural resources.
- **Ethnic tensions:** Many of the highly publicized refugee flows today have been traced to ethnic tensions unleashed by national instabilities and conflicts or fomented by political adversaries. In the process of national consolidation, some minority groups may be viewed as obstacles, breaking up a country's national identity or dividing political loyalties.

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***The United States receives less than 1% of the world's migrants.***

The destinations of migrants have also significantly shifted over the last 30 years. Migration patterns have always been affected by such factors as geographic proximity, historical and political ties, culture, language and so forth. But the dominant flow is South to North, a trend that has significantly increased in the last few decades, and with the United States as a particular magnet for migrants from developing countries. However, there is still considerable migration among Northern countries, and more so among countries in the South. Obviously, 99% of the world's migrants do not come to the United States, despite current national fears that the country is being overrun by "hordes" of the foreign-born.

## Who Are the Migrants?

The International Organization for Migration estimates there may be about 30 million "irregular" migrant workers—those who are undocumented or without legal permission to remain in countries where they live. The United States receives an estimated 200,000-300,000 undocumented immigrants annually.

About 20 million migrants are displaced within their own countries and have not crossed international boundaries.

The refugee population has more than doubled over the last decade and a half: over 20 million today, compared with an estimated 8.5 million in 1980. Seventy-five percent of these refugees have moved to bordering countries in developing regions, which are most hard-pressed to accept new and often rapid increases in population. Refugees are the most numerous within Asia—about 10 million people—with about 5.5 million in Africa and 4.5 million in Europe. By contrast, advanced countries such as the United States and Canada together receive just over 1 million refugees.

Because migration has become such an important issue, recent international fora, such as the U.N.'s International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo last September, have been strongly criticized for their insufficient treatment of the migration question.

Sending countries were especially frustrated at the ICPD by the attitudes of Western nations, typically the receiving countries. A particularly heated debate broke out over the issue of family reunification, which sending countries felt should be preserved in the official conference document as a "right" of migrant people. However, Canada, the United States and European nations opposed the language, offering a compromise that merely "encouraged" nations to consider family reunification in determining their immigration policies—an action which the sending countries, predominantly composed of people of color, felt was just one more example of the racial hostility of the predominantly white receiving nations.

While the conference made gains in asserting the centrality of the empowerment of women in addressing resolutions to rapidly escalating population

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# *Quiz*
# Immigration: Myths & Facts

*The following quiz was prepared by the Applied Research Center (25 Embarcadero Cove, Oakland, CA 94606) as part of one of 15 "issue study groups" for its Campaign on Community Safety & Police Accountability. Answers to the quiz are on page 6.*

1. In the last 4 years, the poorest immigrants arriving in the U.S. came from:
   A) Africa B) Asia C) Central America D) Former Soviet Union

2. The area with the highest percentage of immigrants to the U.S. who are high school graduates is:
   A) Europe B) Central America C) Africa D) Asia

3. The immigrant population that earns the highest median household income in the U.S. is:
   A) Mexican B) English C) Indian D) African

4. In 1910, the U.S. population was 15% foreign-born. In 1990, the foreign-born percentage of the population was:
   A) 8% B) 10% C) 18% D) 22%

5. Studies by the Urban Institute show that for every 100 new immigrants:
   A) Employment decreases by 62 jobs
   B) The number of jobs stays the same
   C) Employment increases by 46 jobs
   D) It's impossible to tell how the job market reacts.

6. A recent Los Angeles County study showed that the county spent $2.45 billion in 1991-92 on schools and other services for resident immigrants. In that same period, resident immigrants:
   A) Paid no taxes
   B) Paid $1.7 billion in taxes
   C) Paid $4.3 billion in taxes
   D) It is impossible to calculate the amount of taxes

7. Nationally, immigrants receive about $5 billion annually in welfare benefits. Approximately how much do they earn and pay in taxes?
   A) Earn $10 billion, pay $1.3 billion in taxes
   B) Earn $15 billion, pay $3 billion in taxes
   C) Earn $100 billion, pay $15 billion in taxes
   D) Earn $240 billion, pay $85 billion in taxes

8. Increased immigration tends to:
   A) Produce higher wages for immigrants
   B) Produce higher wages for U.S. citizens
   C) Produce lower wages for immigrants
   D) Produce lower wages for U.S. citizens

9. A 1992 survey found that it is common for Americans to go to Mexico for health care: 90+% of Mexican physicians surveyed had treated Americans. The major reason U.S. citizens go to Mexico for treatment is:
   A) They believe that Mexican doctors are more qualified
   B) Mexican doctors take all brands of insurance
   C) Mexican doctors and prescription drugs are cheaper
   D) The climate is better

10. In Northern California, undocumented immigrants and refugees seeking political and economic asylum may be jailed and:

| | TRUE | FALSE |
|---|---|---|
| A) Not be accused of any crime | T | F |
| B) Are allowed bail | T | F |
| C) Are allowed a public defender | T | F |
| D) Are not allowed trial by jury | T | F |
| E) May be placed in maximum security | T | F |
| F) Women may be locked-down for up to 22 hours/day | T | F |

(INTERNATL.: Continued from page 2)

growth, the ICPD did not make any headway in confronting the impact of international development policies on population and consequent pressures towards increased migration. Of course, such gross omissions served the political and economic interests of the Western nations that continue to dominate such international gatherings and which resist fetters on their development policies and practices. The debacle over family reunification, however, stirred sending country delegates to press for an international conference on migration and development, a controversial proposal now under consideration at the United Nations.

Such a conference would likely address long-range measures to alleviate migration pressures, including: economic growth, investment and cooperative aid programs; easing the developing countries' tremendous debt burdens; promoting fair trade policies; education, health care access and economic opportunities, especially for women in developing countries; and generally, developing more stable economic environments.

## Migration, Development and Trade

There is strong feeling among developing countries that as trade and development policies and agreements are forged, the question of migration must also be put on the table. This was an especially sore point in the negotiations over NAFTA, which essentially redefined the international border between the United States and Mexico by allowing for the free flow of goods, resources and capital, but which omitted discussion of the obvious flow of labor across borders—a permanent and essential element of the global economy.

In the meantime, as the scope of international migration in the new global economy continues to broaden, considerable concern has arisen for rights protections for migrants—and for foreign nationals residing temporarily in new countries. Most receiving countries are taking steps to restrict immigration in ways that have little impact on migration pressures, but which will severely limit the rights and mobility of immigrants already residing in those countries.

Many countries around the world—not just the major receiving nations—have growing percentages of foreign nationals living within their boundaries, and in many instances, migrants, whether documented or undocumented, have few, if any, rights protections.

## Pursuing International Protections

The U.N.'s 1990 Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families was created to augment existing covenants, further delineating the growing classes of people not residing in their countries of origin. The Convention faces an uphill battle before it "comes into force" (it requires full ratification by 20 countries, and only a few have ratified it thus far). Even when it gains recognition, its provisions are still subject to the civil laws of each country. However, it does set the basis for promoting international rights standards in this era of the global workforce, and provides a framework for evaluating national proposals dealing with immigration. California's anti-immigrant initiative, Proposition 187, for example, certainly violates the spirit and intent of international migrants' rights protections.

(Please turn to page 6)

## Immigrant Rights Organizations

**AFSC/Immigration Law Enforcement Monitoring Project**
5711 Harrisburg
Houston, TX 77011
713/926-2799

**Asian Law Caucus**
468 Bush Street, 3rd floor
San Francisco, CA 94108
415/391-1655

**Center for Human Rights & Constitutional Law**
256 S. Occidental Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90057
213/830-2788

**Center for Immigrant Rights**
48 St. Marks Place
New York, NY 10003
212/505-6890

**Coalition for Immigrant & Refugee Rights & Services**
995 Market Street, 11th floor
San Francisco, CA 94103
415/243-8215

**Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund**
634 S. Spring St., 11th flr.
Los Angeles, CA 90014
213/629-2512

**National Immigration Forum**
220 I Street NE, #220
Washington, DC 20002-4362
202/544-0004

**National Immigration Law Center**
1102 S. Crenshaw Blvd., #101
Los Angeles, CA 90019
213/938-6452

**National Lawyers Guild/ National Immigration Project**
14 Beacon St. #506
Boston, MA 02108
617/227-9727

**National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights**
310 8th Street, Suite 307
Oakland, CA 94607
510/465-1984

# Immigration and the Civil Rights Movement's Response

by Bill Tamayo

The civil rights movement in the United States is currently confronted by numerous social issues of unprecedented complexity: concerted attacks on affirmative action, increasing racial violence and hatred, questions about the "genetic ability" of African-Americans to excel, and the lack of political leadership in government to address these issues.

Passage of California's Proposition 187 (the so-called "Save our State" initiative) in November 1994 drove home the message that immigrants, like many others in America, are a drain on society. The public's perception of this community—nonwhite, undocumented, criminally bent, welfare abusers—was fueled by public officials and the media. Not surprisingly, while African-Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans voted against 187, whites voted for it 2-1.

The general alignment of all civil rights groups in California against Proposition 187 was positive. However, that alignment does not yet reflect a common view on the broader questions of undocumented immigration, immigrants rights and immigration policy overall.

As recently as Spring 1990, the NAACP supported the employer sanctions provisions of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which bars the hiring of undocumented persons and requires some verification of work authorization. While IRCA was being debated in Congress, Latinos, Asians and members of the Congressional Black and Hispanic Caucuses condemned the measure as discriminatory. But the NAACP's Washington lobbyist in 1985 asserted that because of job competition between the undocumented and African-Americans, the organization supported sanctions. And the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights—the nation's premier coordinating mechanism for civil rights advocacy before Congress and the Executive Branch, representing some 185 national organizations—did not oppose employer sanctions because of sharp division in its ranks.

A 1990 GAO study confirmed the predictions of discrimination in its finding and found that nearly 20% of employers admitted discriminating against Asians and Latinos (citizens and lawful permanent residents) because of IRCA. Armed with this evidence, Latinos and Asians, joined by the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF) and many others, convinced the NAACP to revisit the question. Then NAACP Director Benjamin Hooks successfully urged his membership to reverse its position. The Leadership Conference eventually came around, but only after Latino groups publicly voiced their consideration of withdrawing membership.

***Racism has dominated and continues to dominate immigration policies in the United States and other Western nations.***

## Immigration-Bashing = Racism

Racism has dominated and continues to dominate immigration policies in the United States and other Western nations. As recently as 1993, in response to a World Bank report that over 100 million people have left their home countries and to a related report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the G-7 countries (United States, Germany, France, Italy, Canada, Japan and Great Britain) adopted policies to restrict immigration and deny quick access to asylum. These efforts were designed to stem immigration from Africa, Latin America and Asia. The racial component of these policies was vividly illustrated as immigrants from Turkey, the Middle East, Africa and Asia were victims of racial violence throughout Western Europe in the early 90s.

In the United States, these policies translated into proposed curbs on the political asylum process, rapid deportation, increased border enforcement (without provisions for oversight) and efforts to deny undocumented immigrants public services, a la Prop. 187. In 1993, California Governor Pete Wilson proposed denial of citizenship to U.S.-born children whose parents were undocumented. Wilson chose to turn back the clock to an era when U.S.-born African-Americans and Native Americans were denied citizenship by law. While this effort was unsuccessful, Wilson touched an extremely hot button and realized that fanning the flames of xenophobia was not only popular but provided the key element for his re-election.

The recently introduced Personal Responsibility Act sponsored by Republicans would deny legal permanent residents over 40 social services and benefits, including SSI, AFDC, Medicaid and representation by Legal Aid lawyers funded by the Legal Services Corporation.

## The Task for Civil Rights Groups

What should the civil rights movement do amidst this cacophony of hate, racism and nativism? Foremost, the movement must draw out the commonalities among the communities it seeks to represent and on whose behalf it is advocating. Allowing to go unchallenged the pattern of blaming similarly situated victims of racism for one's plight would be a striking setback. If

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anything, the current heightened racialized climate serves as a painful reminder that many of us are in the same boat and need not blame each other for being there. Even perceptions that nonwhite but nonblack minorities who may or may not be citizens should not be at the table of civil rights debate do an injustice to the vision of civil rights leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and others who approached the issue of civil and human rights with a global and internationalist perspective.

While the history of the movement has been inconsistent on the issue of immigrants' rights, there have been proud moments. The ACLU was formed out of challenges to the roundups and deportations of immigrant labor activists during the Palmer Raids of 1919-1920 and continues to represent immigrants in civil rights matters. In 1915, the NAACP successfully defeated a Senate amendment to deny admission to persons of African descent, and in 1952 argued for defeat of the dangerous McCarran-Walter Act, which maintained the racist national origins quotas in our immigration laws. During the Proposition 187 campaign, the Urban League, NAACP LDF, Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund, and Asian organizations vociferously opposed the measure. These experiences lay the foundation for a more concerted effort to protect the rights of immigrants and beat back the racism that underlies anti-immigrant measures. More important, that joint practice serves to build a common vision about who is responsible for this climate of hate and racism, and leads to a decrease in interethnic hostilities.

Civil rights groups have an important mission in this period. They must be able to more forcefully articulate the issues of the immigrant population, including the undocumented, and assert that this community is part of the civil rights community. They must assert that working together and drawing the lessons are the main ways in which we can survive this period of vitriolic scapegoating and "racialized patriotism" in which nonwhites and noncitizens are being jointly demonized without mercy.

*Bill Tamayo, a PRRAC Board member, is Managing Attorney at the Asian Law Caucus (468 Bush St., 3rd flr., San Francisco, CA 94108; 415/391-1655).* □

## Answers
## Immigration: Myths & Facts

1. D. Recent immigrants from the former Soviet Union are among the poorest and the least employed, far more so than Latin American or Asian newcomers, according to the U.S. Census. (Source: "Census Data Reveal Wide Immigrant Diversity," *San Francisco Examiner*, Sept. 23, 1993.)

2. C. Almost 88% of African immigrants had a high school diploma and 47% had a bachelor's degree or better, according to a Census Bureau study. Africans, as a group, are also better educated than the general U.S. population: only 77% of U.S.-born adults have a high school diploma and just over 20% have a bachelor's degree or higher. (Source: "African Immigrants Best Educated in the U.S., Census Shows," *Contra Costa Times*, Sept. 23, 1993.)

3. B. The median household income for an immigrant from the United Kingdom was $41,158. Japanese immigrants came in second at $35,487. Most Central American and African immigrants were in the high teens. Median income for Mexicans was $16,712, and Indians ranked 7th at $22,231. The lowest paid are Vietnamese ($12,507). Laotians ($11,750) and those from the former Soviet Union ($8,248). (Source: "America's Diverse Immigrants," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sept. 23, 1993.)

*Question to ponder:* If Africans as a group are the highest educated, why is their median household income ($17,871) in the lower half of the income scale?

4. A. The figure is from Susan Lapham, a Census Bureau demographer who authored the Bureau's study on immigrants. (Source: "Census Data Reveal Wide Immigrant Diversity," *San Francisco Examiner*, Sept. 23, 1993.)

5. C. (Source: Study cited in "From Bill to Pete," *RaceFile*, Sept., 1993.)

6. C. (Source: Study cited in "From Bill to Pete," in *RaceFile*, Sept., 1993.)

7. D. (Source: "Immigrants: How They're Helping the Economy," *Business Week*, July 13, 1992.)

8. C. "Although wages fell in California during the recent wave of immigration, immigrants absorbed most of the adverse impact." (Source: "The Fourth Wave," by Thomas Muller and Thomas Espenshade, 1985, cited in "Advocate's Quick Reference Guide to Immigration Research," National Council of La Raza, Aug., 1993.)

9. C. (Source: "Going to Mexico: Priced Out of American Health Care," Families USA Foundation, Nov. 1992, cited in "Advocate's Quick Reference Guide to Immigration Research," National Council of La Raza, Aug., 1993.)

10. A) True; B) False; C) False; D) True; E) True; F) True. (Source: "Give Me Your Tired, Your Poor: The Jailing of Immigrants in Alameda County," *The California Prisoner*, Summer, 1993.)

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The tendency of countries to build higher walls in an attempt to block immigration in no way addresses the complexities of migration, but is a simplistic response to heightening ignorance, racial intolerance and xenophobia. Migration—not just immigration into any one country—is an international issue, a manifestation of uneven social, political and economic development and conflict that requires cooperation and collective action among countries and regions.

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# Latino Immigrants in Los Angeles: A Portrait from The 1990 Census

by David Hayes-Bautista, Werner Schink & Gregory Rodriguez

*What follows is a somewhat shortened version (and without charts or footnotes) of a study of the same title, published by the Alta California Policy Research Center (555 Flower St., Los Angeles, CA 90021, 213/629-2471). Contact them to obtain the complete report.*

Reasoned analysis of authoritative data sources has been in short supply in recent debates over immigration. Skewed estimates and dubious extrapolations have been bandied about in a discourse that has become, at times, increasingly illogical. While this country has every reason to consider its immigration policies carefully, the current climate of blame, fear and hyperbole has not afforded the issue of immigration the proper consideration it deserves.

Recently released data from the 1990 Census, the Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS), finally allow for a comprehensive analysis of Latino immigrants. . . . While Census PUMS data are not flawless, because of the sheer volume of people enumerated (over 440,000 respondents in Los Angeles County alone) and the attempts at completeness, these data form the "gold standard" in population matters.

## Latino Immigrants: How Many?

The 1990 Census counted a total of 3,306,116 Latinos in Los Angeles County. Of these, 1,511,744 were Latinos born in the US. Thus, the US Born Latinos were slightly under half (45.7%) the total Latino population. 1,794,372 Immigrant Latinos in the County in 1990 are predominantly of Mexican origin, although there are 315,798 Central Americans included in that figure.

**Estimating the Undocumented:** The PUMS data offer a new opportunity to estimate the size of the undocumented population, in that they are based on an actual enumeration of people residing in the county, with information about birthplace and date of arrival to the US included. By a process of elimination, in which those Latinos who are not likely to be undocumented are eliminated from the total Census figure, we can approximate the size of the undocumented population.

Of the total number of Latino immigrants in the County, 1,072,825 had arrived prior to 1982. Thus, they would have either arrived with full documentation, or should have applied for the amnesty provision of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986; there is no reason why any significant portion of this pre-1982 group should, by 1990, still have been undocumented.

Of the remaining number, data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service provide a basis for refining the Census data. Between 1982 and 1990, the INS reported 273,282 Latinos admitted to the US with documents who indicated their intention to ultimately reside in the Los Angeles-Long Beach metropolitan region. In addition, the INS reported a total of 190,983 Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) applicants (a post-1982 amnesty program for agricultural workers) from the Los Angeles-Long Beach region.

Of the total 3,306,116 Latinos enumerated in the Census of 1990, a total of 257,280 cannot be accounted for as US Born or presumably documented immigrants, hence may be assumed to be undocumented. This figure indicates that approximately 7% of the total Latino population might be undocumented in 1990. Because the PUMS data do not distinguish between documented and undocumented immigrants. the rest of this report will present data on all Immigrant Latinos.

## Labor Force Participation

**High Labor Force Participation:** Latino male immigrants are the most active participants in the Los Angeles work force: their labor force participation rate far exceeds that of Anglo, Black, Asian or US Born Latino males. Fully 86% of Immigrant Latino males age 16 and older participate in the labor force, compared to 77.8% for Anglo, 76.2% for US Born Latino, 69.7% for Black and 75.3% for Asian males of the same age.

**Low Rates of Not in Labor Force:** Latino Immigrant males are the least likely to leave the labor force: only 14% occupied the status of Not in Labor Force for 1990, much lower than the 22.2% of Anglo, 23.8% of US Born Latino, 30.8% of Black and 24.7% of Asian males age 16 and older.

**Hours Worked:** Labor force activity is also measured in hours worked per week. A higher percent of Immigrant Latino males worked 35 or more hours per week than did males of any other group: 67.5% of such males worked 35 or more hours per week, compared to 62.5% of Anglo males, 56.8% of US Born Latino males, 50.2% of Black males and 60.5% of Asian males.

**Private Sector:** The private sector of the economy is the engine of economic growth. Immigrant Latino males are, by far, much more likely to be employed in the private sector than any other group: 76.8% worked in the private sector, compared to 59% of Anglo, 64.2% of US Born Latinos, 51.7% of Black males and 66.2% of Asian males.

**Public Sector:** Immigrant Latino males were, by far, the least likely to work in public sector jobs, at the federal, state, county, city or special district level. Only 3.2% of Latino Immigrant males worked in govern-

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ment jobs, much lower than the 9.2% of Anglo, 11.1% of US Born Latino, 17.7% of Black and 9% of Asian males.

**Female Labor Force Participation:** Although policy makers tend to focus exclusively on male labor force status, female labor force activity should also be considered. Females of all groups have lower labor force participation rates than males. While the rates for male participation varied quite a bit (ranging from a high of 86% to a low of 69.7%), female rates are grouped more closely together. Latina Immigrant females had the lowest rate of labor force participation, but the 49.2% rate was only slightly lower than the 54.8% of Anglo females, 53.7% of US Born Latina, 51.5% of Black and 54.8% of Asian females.

Even though the Immigrant Latina rate is the lowest, it should be borne in mind that Immigrant Latina females are many times more likely to be married with children than Anglo, US Born Latina or Black. From that perspective, Immigrant Latina participation rates are extraordinary.

## Income, Poverty and Public Assistance

**Low Income:** For all their activity in the labor force and economy, Immigrant Latinos are poorly rewarded. Their average household income of $29,989 was much lower than that of any other group: $52,375 for Anglo, $43,777 for US Born Latino, $32,813 for Black and $49,042 for Asian households.

**High Poverty:** Once again, in spite of being the most active element in the labor force, Immigrant Latinos have the highest poverty rate of any group: 24.2% of Immigrant Latino adults live in poverty. By way of contrast, only 7.8% of Anglo adults, 13.2% of US Born Latino adults, 19.2% of Black adults and 13.5% of Asian adults live in poverty.

**Low Public Assistance:** While there is a widely disseminated image that Immigrant Latinos are welfare abusers, the 1990 Census PUMS data show a different profile. Immigrant Latinos were by far the least likely to receive Public Assistance: Immigrant Latino adults receiving Public Assistance represented only 16.9% of Immigrant Latino adults in poverty. By contrast, Anglo adults receiving Public Assistance represented 41.7% of Anglo adults in poverty; US Born Latino adults receiving Public Assistance represented 50.4% of such adults in poverty; Black adults receiving Public Assistance were 64.6% of Black adults in poverty; and Asian adults receiving Public assistance represented 48.8% of such adults in poverty.

Immigrant Latino adults receive the least income, yet have the least propensity, by far, to utilize Public Assistance programs.

## Family

**Couples With Children:** Immigrant Latino households are, by far, more likely to be composed of the classic nuclear family—a couple with children—than are households from any other group. Fully 49.6% of Immigrant Latino households are made up of Couples with Children. This is much higher than the 18.4% of Anglo, 30.7% of US Born Latino, 16.8% of Black and 38.4% of Asian households.

**Non Family and Primary Single:** In part because of their propensity to form Couple with Children households, Immigrant Latinos are the least likely to form a household composed of Non Family (unrelated adults in the same housing unit) or Primary Single (adult living alone). Only 19.5% of Immigrant Latino households were of the Non Family and Primary Single type. By contrast, 48.1% of Anglo, 31.9% of US Born Latino, 45.1% of Black and 30.4% of Asian households were composed of the Non Family or Primary Single type.

**Divorced Households:** Immigrant Latino households were the least likely to be composed of a divorced householder. Only 3.7% of Immigrant Latino households consisted of a divorced householder. This is much lower than the 11.2% of Anglo, 8.1% of US Born Latino, 13.6% of Black and 4.4% of Asian households.

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## Education

**Adult High School Non-Completion:** Immigrant Latino adults, age 25 and older, usually come from the rural areas of Mexico and Latin America, where elementary school education is often all that is available. Thus, when enumerated in the 1990 Census, Immigrant Latino adults had the highest percent of High School Non-Completion: 70.5% of Immigrant Latino adults did not complete high school. This is a much higher percent than among Anglo adults (14.4%), US Born Latino adults (35.3%), Black adults (25.4%), or Asian adults (20.7%).

## Immigrant Latinos & Immigrant Anglos: A Comparison

California's metamorphosis into a virtual nation-state, was a product of people meeting resources, the values, dreams and hard work of millions of individuals woven into policy. From 1940 to 1970, the in-migrants who nearly tripled the state's population were considered an essential asset. To accommodate them, the state built roads, aqueducts, freeways, schools and the world's premier public university system.

The foundation of post-World War II California was laid with civic money and a broadly shared civic consensus to invest in the new population and the future. The in-migrant population, and its children, were provided with resources for commerce, development and research, which, when combined with their vigor and character, created wealth.

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# Job Competition Between Immigrants & African Americans

by Paul Ong and Abel Valenzuela, Jr.

...On the question of whether immigrants are taking jobs away from African Americans, one is tempted to deny the existence of this competition, based on findings from studies done in the 1980s on the effects of immigration during the 1970s, which show very little or no adverse impacts. However, the validity of these studies has been called into question on methodological grounds, and furthermore, there is no reason to believe that the impacts during the 1980s were identical to those in the 1970s....

Our analysis focuses on the impact of immigration on the joblessness and earnings among black males between the ages of 18 and 24, and those between the ages of 18 and 64 with no more than a high school education. These populations were chosen because they are the most susceptible to job competition, primarily due to their concentration in the low-pay and high-turn-over secondary sector. The analysis of joblessness and earnings is based on a comparison of outcomes in Los Angeles County to those in 55 other metropolitan areas (MSAs).... Through the use of multivariate techniques, we attempt to estimate how immigration has disadvantaged blacks in Los Angeles relative to their counterparts in other metropolitan areas, after taking into account both individual and regional factors. Our findings indicate that immigration increases joblessness among African Americans, with a larger net impact coming from the presence of Latino immigrants with limited education. On the other hand, there is no detectable net impact on earnings....

While Los Angeles has a relatively small percent of the African American labor force, it has a very large percent of the immigrant labor force. Immigrant-black ratios are very high in Los Angeles, and in the case of Latino immigrants, the ratios here are about ten times higher than the average for the other 55 MSAs. Consequently, whatever immigrant impacts are found for Los Angeles should be higher than in other parts of the U.S....

We estimate that there is a small positive impact of Latino immigration on earnings, which is produced by two offsetting effects. The presence of immigrants appears to have a direct complementary effect in increasing the earnings of African Americans who are employed, but on the other hand, the larger flow of immigrants works indirectly through joblessness to depress earnings....

***The impact of Latino immigrants on African Americans should be placed in the context of racism in the labor market.***

We argue that immigrants have a complementary effect for African Americans in public sector employment due to the increased demand in public services and agencies as a result of the growth of legal and illegal immigration. ... As the demand for public services, programs and personnel has grown due to the population growth, a large part of which comes from immigration, African American employment in this sector has increased.

While the above findings indicate measurable impacts in Los Angeles of Latino immigration, this is not the same as saying that all aspects of immigration are bad for African Americans. There are at least three other factors at work here. First, our own analysis indicates that other immigrants appear to have a positive, or net complementary, effect on African Americans. The presence of Asian and other (non-Hispanic and non-Asian) immigrants is not related to higher black joblessness, but is positively related to higher black earnings. Second, other native minority populations are likely to be affected by immigration. And finally, immigrants generate benefits for many segments of society by providing cheap goods and services. For many professionals and better paid workers, Latino immigrants are a major source of nannies and other domestic support work.

Moreover, the impact of Latino immigrants on African Americans should be placed in the context of racism in the labor market. Indeed, we find sizable racial effects on joblessness and earnings. These disparities hold for both 1970, which was prior to the massive influx of immigrants, and 1990....

The analyses of Latino immigrant impact and racism show that both factors play significant roles in disadvantaging African Americans in terms of joblessness and earnings. The estimates suggest that racial discrimination and segmentation is relatively more important in both areas. The additional joblessness associated with racial disparity is three to four times greater than that associated with immigration, and all of the adverse impacts on earnings comes from racial disparity. However, the impacts of racism and immigration are not unrelated. The differences [we report] between young adults and less-educated adults support our contention. The higher concentration of blacks in the secondary labor market, where the bulk of low-skilled Latino immigrants have been incorporated, exposes blacks to greater job competition and perhaps contributes to their increased joblessness rates and to their lack of progress in earnings relative to non-Hispanic whites. Last, in an issue we did not analyze, the interaction between racism

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(COMPETITION: Continued from page 9)

(discriminatory practices and segmentation) and immigration may be further compounded by also interacting with imports. George Borjas argues that immigration and imports are highly correlated, and may produce the same impacts on native workers. Consequently, some of the substitution effect associated with immigration is also caused by growing imports. Moreover, immigrant workers are most likely to be incorporated into the domestic sectors that are under import pressures. In other words, these jobs would have been lost if there had been no immigrants.

## Policy Implications & Conclusion

. . . The finding of a persistent black-white differential is consistent with a national pattern of higher joblessness and lower earnings for African Americans than for non-Hispanic whites, even after controlling for schooling and age. In this regard, African Americans in Los Angeles are no different from African Americans in other regions of the country, many of whom live in areas with very little immigration. The explanation for our findings is complex. African Americans start off being disadvantaged by having less education, a product of a biased and ineffective educational system. This racial bias is magnified in the labor market, which concentrates African Americans in the secondary sector. Consequently, our findings suggest that being African American increases the likelihood of being confined to jobs in the secondary sector. Our study shows that increased joblessness for African Americans is connected to increases in Latino immigration, but it also shows that endemic racism plays a central role.

Our findings present a serious challenge to the simultaneous pursuit of civil rights for African Americans and upholding our heritage as a nation of immigration. The existence of job competition between Latino immigrants and African Americans (and possibly other U.S.-born minorities and more established immigrants) has been seized by some as a rationale for stopping immigration.... This position—that immigrants hurt blacks and the poor—is at best incomplete. In part, there is evidence that some types of immigration can be beneficial. To generalize about all immigration is an exercise in misleading polemics. Furthermore, to truly fight for black equality in this country, a sound policy must include efforts to eradicate endemic racism. To focus only on immigrants as the source disadvantaging African Americans would, in our opinion, constitute scapegoating of an already vulnerable group and miss the point of our paper—that other factors such as labor market discrimination and segmentation are more important in explaining African American inequality. Even worse, focusing solely on immigration brings out a form of nativism that ultimately reinforces racially based prejudices.

***It would be unfair to insist on "Third World solidarity" while ignoring a real cost of immigration for African Americans.***

Rhetorical anti-immigrant arguments may be easily dismissed, but the political movements of minority rights can also fall into an ideological trap. Some political activists would dismiss this form of conflict (e.g., job competition) as a strategy of divide-and-conquer perpetuated by those in power or one based on cultural misunderstandings. One could argue that, with experience and education, those at the bottom would come to see their shared plight and unite in a common struggle. This position, however, flies against the material reality and an emerging political nationalist sentiment within minority communities. It would be unfair to insist on "Third World solidarity" while ignoring a real cost of immigration for African Americans. There is a fundamental problem of racism, which not only seriously disadvantages minorities but also magnifies the impact of immigration on some communities, but this retort does little to address the immediate harsh reality. Indeed, there is a rising anti-immigrant sentiment among native-born minorities. Much of this has taken the form of growing resentment towards undocumented aliens, who are almost always seen as Latinos. This resentment became vividly clear in a pre-and-post election poll on minority voter support for the 1994 California Proposition 187. Indeed, statewide exit polls showed that 47 percent of African American and Asian voters and 23 percent of Latino voters supported passage of this proposition. Other polls showed strong minority support, including Latinos, for more stringent immigration laws. But, as stated earlier, anti-immigrant politics is not easily confined to attacks on illegal immigration, for it easily spills over as a nativist attack on all immigrants.

Xenophobic reactions, which are heavily tinged with racial overtones, have the potential of muting the struggle for civil rights and racial justice. As California has changed from a mostly white population to a mostly Latino, Asian and African American population, the politics of fear and uncertainty have resurfaced. Anti-immigrant political rhetoric, unconstitutional propositions and increased violence are as much targeted against undocumented and legal immigrants as they are against dissatisfaction with California's deteriorated lifestyle and poor economic status. Indeed, placing the blame for California's fallen economy on immigrants and, by extension, minority communities, distracts attention from the ineptitude of current and former state and local government officials and bad public policy.

We must engage in a conscious effort to formulate a new civil rights agenda if we are to attack racial inequality and the scapegoating of immigrants. We should start by recognizing the uniqueness of Los Angeles. Based on our analysis, the impact of Latino immi-

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*(COMPETITION: Continued from page 10)*

gration throughout the rest of the nation is only one-tenth as great. The effects may be even smaller since the ability to absorb immigration need not be linear—that is, smaller flows over longer periods may be incorporated without the adverse impacts documented in our study. National immigration policy should not be dictated by this region's concerns. We should also recognize, as we pointed out earlier and as documented in countless studies, that immigration also generates positive outcomes often felt on an aggregate or national level. Newcomers add to the dynamism and vitality of this nation. They bring skills that will prove invaluable to our country in an increasingly competitive global economy.

The task before us, then, is finding ways to lower the uncomfortable trade-off imposed by job competition. In part, this means that we should seriously consider enforcing border policies and increasing the role of economic objectives in formulating immigration policy. The weak enforcement of border policies creates a large undocumented population that is at the heart of the immigration debate. While stringent enforcement will not cease undocumented immigration, it can stem the flow to some degree and thus lessen the supply of less-skilled workers. However, controlling the border is not the same as attacking those already in the U.S. It is important that the rights of those already here in the United States be protected, especially since they are the product of lax enforcement policies and an implicit policy that supports employers who have become accustomed to and even dependent on cheap immigrant labor. By establishing roots in Los Angeles and participating in economic activities including the labor market, consumerism and tax outlays, undocumented immigrants have rightful claim to being a part of this society. In addition to enforcing the border, we must have fair levels of legal immigration to fulfill our obligations as an "immigrant" country and to meet our labor demand. In doing so, we must be careful to not reinforce race and nationality quotas into laws governing immigration. Immigration laws have legitimacy from a civil rights perspective only when they are non-discriminatory.

We should be equally concerned about attacking the underlying racism that unfairly concentrates African Americans into the very sector that is being adversely affected by immigration. Civil rights policy needs to continue to amend past and present injustices in the educational, political and economic areas with an explicit realization that immigrants also belong to America and, by extension, the civil rights family.

*The above article is excerpted (tables, footnotes and bibliographic citations omitted) from a chapter titled "The Political Economy of Job Competition Between Immigrants and African Americans," to appear in the forthcoming collection,* Ethnic Los Angeles, *Roger Waldinger & Mehdi Bozorgmehr, eds. (Russell Sage Press).*

*Paul Ong, a member of PRRAC's Social Science Advisory Board, is Associate Professor of Urban Planning at UCLA. Abel Valenzuela, Jr. is Assistant Professor at UCLA's Cesar Chavez Center for Interdisciplinary Instruction in Chicano/a Studies. Prof. Valenzuela also has a related study, "Compatriots or Competitors? A Study of Job Competition Between the Foreign-born and U.S.-born in Los Angeles, 1970-1980," scheduled to appear in the Winter 1995 issue of the* New England Journal of Public Policy. □

*(LOS ANGELES: Continued from page 8)*

The Anglo population was, at the start of World War II, very similar to the Immigrant Latino population of 1990 in its income, education, work ethic and family structure. Some comparison may be instructive. The Anglo data are taken from the 1940 Census Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS) for the state of California.

**Recent Arrivals:** California has long had a very mobile population. Since its incorporation as a state in 1850, California growth has been largely a product of people moving into the state from other areas. This is true for the Anglo population as well as for the Latino. In 1940, 64.9% of the Anglo population had moved into the state from another area. In 1990, a similar percent of Latinos were also in-migrants: 54.3% moved in, this time from another country.

**High Labor Force Participation:** The Anglo male in 1940 had a high rate of participation in the labor force: 81.5% were active in the work force. In 1990, Immigrant Latino males had a similar, and slightly higher, rate of participation, 86%.

**High Poverty:** Poverty data were not available for 1940, but even in 1950, with the Post World War II economic boom well under way, 25.5% of the Anglo population lived in poverty. Forty years later, in 1990, a nearly identical, but slightly lower, percent of Immigrant Latinos live in poverty: 24.2%.

**Strong Families:** In 1990, 32.9% of Anglo households were composed of Couples with Children. Immigrant Latino households in 1990 are more likely to be composed of Couples with Children: 49.6% of Immigrant Latino households are so composed.

**High School Non-Completion:** A fact often forgotten is that in 1940, 61.5% of Anglo adults did not graduate from high school. While the rate for Immigrant Latinos in 1990 is higher, at 70.5%, the two rates surprisingly close.

## A Final Word

Today's Immigrant Latinos are, in their values and behaviors, very much like the earlier generation of in-migrating Anglos who benefited from an exuberant civic spirit. Investing in a youthful, hard-working, forward-looking population was a wise decision in the 1940s and 1950s, and is still the wisest approach to a more prosperous future for all. □

# Racial/Ethnic Categories—A Symposium (Part 2)

*We continue the Symposium begun in our last issue, commenting on the lead article in our November/December issue, "Racial/Ethnic Categories: Do They Matter?" (an edited version of a July 25, 1994,* New Yorker *feature by Lawrence Wright, titled "One Drop of Blood"). In the last issue, we presented comments by Raúl Yzaguirre/Sonia Pérez, Juanita Tamayo Lott, Libero Della Piana, john powell, Samuel Myers, Jr., and Reynolds Farley. This final segment offers contributions by Ibrahim K. Sundiata, Carol Korenbrot, Nathan Glazer and Chris Hansen. To repeat our editorial practice: we go with whatever terminology, punctuation, capitalization our contributors use with respect to racial and ethnic designations.*

*New readers can obtain a copy of Part 1 of the Symposium, as well as the initial article in the November/December issue, by sending a SASE with 55¢ postage. The February 13, 1995, issue of* Newsweek *had a 9-page special section, "What Color is Black? Science, Politics & Racial Identity," which we'll also be glad to send with a SASE (55¢ postage).*

## At the Races: the Multicultural Proposal

by Ibrahim K. Sundiata

For more than two years, the federal government has been considering revising race in America. Among the most controversial proposals is one calling for creation of a mixed-race "multiracial" category. The debate on this subject promises to establish the context for race relations for the next century and beyond.

The Office of Management and Budget, which oversees establishment of official race categories, has several options. It could urge abolition of all racial data gathering. Conversely, it could multiply the number of new ethnolinguistic categories. Neither approach would solve any long-range problems. Abolition of race is not feasible. The collection of racial data is essential for anti-discrimination measures—for instance, the 1965 Voting Rights Act. At the same time, creation of ever greater numbers of categories meets political demands, but also creates confusion as categories overlap. This would be the chief problem if the proposed multiracial category were to become law.

It must be directly faced that any multiracial proposal would "deconstruct" the historic Black category, due to undercounting and reclassification. Legally enumerated Black populations have all but disappeared in several countries, most notably Brazil, Argentina and Costa Rica. Significantly, the United States Census has been acclaimed because it did not, for a large part of the 20th Century, have a mixed-race category. In 1972, Carl Degler, in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book, *Neither Black Nor White*, argued that the United States' race relations were better than those in Latin America because the U.S. Census made no distinction between Blacks and people of mixed Black descent. According to Degler's thesis, racial segregation, anti-miscegenation laws and legalized Jim Crow led to intense group solidarity. The Civil Rights Movement was one outcome of this unity, a unity that contrasted with the fragmented nature of racial identity in Brazil, for instance. There, he argued, the "Mulatto Escape Hatch" siphoned off much of the potential "Black" leadership. Civil rights legislation and affirmative action could emerge in the United States because of the very fixity of racial boundaries.

Creation of a mixed-race category for the year 2000 Census would answer the demands of many individuals—especially the offspring of Whites and Blacks—who are not included in any of the present "racial" categories. It would also serve to limit the number of Blacks. Degler observed: "All offspring of Whites and Negroes are Negroes. Therefore, if intermarriage did become widespread, the result would be a Negro majority—or a change in the definition of a Negro." We have reached the latter point with the proposal now before the government.

Conceptually, the multiracial proposal presents several problems. For one: who would be counted? The African American population already has varying amounts of European ancestry. In addition, many persons are of partially Native American ancestry. Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Dubois, Walter White, Adam Clayton Powell, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Thurgood Marshall and Lani Guinier were, or are, all "multiracial." If the new category lacked widespread public support, it would tell us very little. Because membership would be on the basis of self-declaration, Census numbers would still not reflect the actual number of "mixed-race" persons within the general population. Also, would the category be retroactive or would it apply to offspring conceived after the prescribed date? Very importantly, how would the new category affect implementation of existing civil rights legislation?

Advocates of the "multiracial" proposal insist that it recognizes biology. What they fail to realize is that the term itself posits the existence of two or more "pure" races, a situation that is chimerical. The proposal accepts antiquated notions of ideal racial essences and then proposes to rectify racism by multiplying categories. What has been labelled "race" in the United States represents

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on-going "ethnic" communities that have a shared history and often a common experience of legalized discrimination. The supposed problem of what to do with the offspring of mixed marriages presents, at bottom, a problem no greater or smaller than that presented by other types of interethnic marriages—for instance, Hispanic/non-Hispanic. The individual, under the policy of self-selection that has been operative since 1960, is free to choose the category of primary identification—or none at all.

If "multiracial" were to be anything more than a euphemism for the old "mulatto" category, abolished after 1910, it would have to be defined in such a way as to include large numbers of people from the present Hispanic and Asian groups. What would be the effect of change on Asians, Hispanics and Native Americans? Asian/Pacific Islanders and American Indians have comparatively high rates of out-marriage. There is little evidence that these groups wish to place interracial offspring in a new "multiracial" designation. Indeed, the proposed category is opposed by La Raza and the Asian American Legal Defense Fund.

One of the most deleterious effects of a "multiracial" category would be that it would disaggregate one group while others were in the process of government-managed aggregation. The Asian/Pacific Islander category includes individuals from Pakistan to Fiji who have no common racial, religious or linguistic link. The Hispanic category, created in 1980, has been defined very broadly for political reasons. It now stretches to include Mayas in Guatemala and the children of German immigrants in Argentina. This administrative creation is not the ethnic label chosen by most people within the group (e.g., Chicanos and Puerto Ricans) and has served chiefly as a means of trans-ethnic political mobilization in an era of civil rights legislation.

The disaggregation of Blacks would drive a wedge into the community that would not only increase the isolation of its most disadvantaged members. The flight of the Black middle class from inner-city neighborhoods has already been noted by numerous scholars. Some have also found a relationship between skin color and socioeconomic status within the African American community. Creating a North American version of the "Mulatto Escape Hatch" would have the effect of legally hastening the proliferation of caste boundaries in a society that is already a "pigmentocracy." In a recent review of Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray's *Bell Curve* in the conservative *National Review*, historian Eugene Genovese predicted a "caste war between mulattoes and Blacks." Without a doubt, any split in the community will be acted on by those inimical to its interests. The manipulation of the "Coloured" (Mixed Race) category by South Africa's former apartheid regime should stand as a caveat to those who would advocate its introduction here.

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# Racial/Ethnic Categories: Do They Matter to Health?

by Carol C. Korenbrot

Race and ethnic data play an important role in national, state and some local health policies. A number of public databases document differences in health status and services among different racial and ethnic groups, and many of the differences indicate a need to prioritize policies for different ethnic groups:

- African-Americans have shorter life expectancies than white Americans.
- The excess mortality of black males has become progressively greater for almost all major chronic diseases during the last 40 years.
- Homicide is the leading cause of death for African-American women ages 15-34.
- African American women ages 25-55 are three to four times more likely to die of heart disease, stroke and complications of pregnancy than white women.
- African American and Hispanic women have higher rates of diabetes, hypertension and cardiovascular disease than white women.
- African American and Hispanic women (one-fifth of all women) account for three-fourths of all US women who are reported to have AIDS.
- Whites have more contacts with physicians, and most are by telephone or office visit; blacks have had more physician contacts in a hospital, clinic or emergency room.
- More Hispanics (27%) and blacks (19%) have no health insurance than whites (12%).

At the same time, these government data reveal dangers of the double-edged sword of race-categorized health data that can both help and hurt racial and ethnic minorities. Data that document higher rates of poor health status or higher use of public health services in a particular group can be used to

stigmatize all members of the group. In addition, confounding social, demographic, economic or political factors that contribute to disease are rarely factored out of published ethnic differences in health. Either of two problems can develop as a result:

- Health policies are changed with no impact on health status, because far more sweeping policy changes in housing, employment or general assistance are needed; or
- Health policies are not changed because the health differences are ascribed to the underclass characteristics that explain the differences and are considered beyond the scope of health care policy.

The definition and use of racial categories in health data were largely unquestioned until recently because of the tacitly accepted role of genetically transmitted physical characteristics in defining racial groups (such as skin colors), as well as the role of genetically transmitted physical characteristics in health status differences (such as skin cancers). When race is used in health data, there is a tendency to assume that a genetic reason may explain differences. But often there is no known potential genetic explanation for differences that are documented. Until recently, there has been little research dedicated to how well or how poorly the racial categories of health data used for public policy actually meet scientific criteria of mutually exhaustive and exclusive groupings of people by any definable characteristics. A recent multiracial Public Health Service workshop concluded, "Current concepts of race and ethnicity in public health surveillance data lack clarity, precision and consensus." It is important to note, however, that the group recommended not to abolish racial/ethnic categories but to: "Establish definitions for race and ethnicity tailored for specific purposes in public health. . . . "

In our paper on health data for the PRRAC Federal Data Reconnaissance Project, we documented the usefulness of racial group-specific data in monitoring the progress of the country towards equity in health status and health services. It would be a shame to allow the recent burgeoning progress in understanding of ethnic differences in health to be threatened by political attempts to reduce ethnic categorization. Clearly, more categories are necessary, not fewer. At the same time, continued action is needed to avoid biased attitudes, conscious and subconscious, not just in the categorization of racial groups, but in the interpretation and use of the data.

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# On the Census Race and Ethnic Categories

by Nathan Glazer

The first round of responses on the question of whether and how the racial/ethnic categories in the Census and other government statistics should be modified shows the enormous problems involved in getting agreement on any set of categories. We have moved from the first Census of 1790, and a situation in which we distinguished only between whites and blacks—easy enough then, as the two categories were defined in law so that the line between the two races was absolutely clear—to one in which endless confusion prevails. More than 40% of the short Census form, which every person must respond to, now consists of complicated questions on race and Hispanic origin, as if the chief business of government was to pigeonhole people by these categories. Why are they more important than questions on education, place of birth, citizenship, housing, income, occupation and a host of other valuable items of information? This alone should embarrass us, and should lead us to consider seriously not only how we can improve these questions (whatever improvement means, which will be rather different depending on whom you ask) but also how we can reduce the prominence of racial-ethnic assignment in our Census. Do we want our Census, whose origin was simply to permit the proper representation of the people in Congress, to be a document whose primary purpose is to assign the population to race and ethnic groups? Alas, the development of public policies judged increasingly by their differential impact on various ethnic and racial groups makes this development almost inevitable.

The categories we use should serve two purposes. One is to accurately reflect categories that are in fact socially significant—for politics, for social life, for culture, for personal identity—since one purpose of the Census is to give a picture of the American people. The second is to serve public policy, by providing the numbers that politicians and people insist upon to judge our progress in fairness and equality. There are inevitable contradictions between the two objectives, as is clear in the rise of groups insisting on their mixed-race character, something which public policy does not recognize. People insist on defining themselves properly, from their personal point of view, but it is a point of view that does not cohere with

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the categories public policy has defined. For the Census to take into account all the categories that are meaningful to people in defining themselves is of course impossible: the picture of the American people derived from the Census and official statistics will always be crude, drawn in broad brush strokes, and will have to be supplemented by nonofficial social research based on small samples. The *Wall Street Journal* for February 2 describes the explosion of politically relevant categories in the local politics of tolerant San Francisco, where a black male official challenges the appointment of a black female lesbian to some post on the ground that she will be more sympathetic to lesbians than to blacks, while the appointment is defended by a Hispanic lesbian. All the identities are relevant to San Francisco, only some should be relevant for the Census.

Clearly, the key division in American society, from its origins, and from the first Census, has been between black and other. It is still the basic division, and its centrality is indicated by the relatively low rates of intermarriage between blacks and others, and the relatively high residential concentration of blacks, as compared to all other groups the Census defines as "races." But when it comes to almost all other groups, intermarriage leads to an abundance of multiple ethnic ancestries, and to a declining significance for many individuals of ethnic ancestry. This means that nonblack groups are less sharply defined, less significant for American history, and for the individuals identified with them, than are blacks. The Voting Rights Act and other legislation tries (quite wrongly) to assume an equivalence in the deprived status of all nonwhite racial groups and all Hispanic groups. The economic success of many Asian groups undermines this purely political assumption; the success of Cubans, politically and economically, and the differences in economic and educational achievement among Hispanic groups, also undermines it. Asians were once subject to a fierce legal discrimination, Mexican Americans were subject to political and social (and to some extent legal) discrimination, but there is no comparison between the status of Asian-American and Hispanic groups and blacks.

To have a line-up of races in the Census that lists white, black, Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Asian Indian, etc., is false both to the limited scientific validity of racial difference and to the social significance of the varied groups. To distinguish specific Asian groups, considered separate "races" in the Census, from European ethnic groups, considered all of one "race," makes no sense, except that for no good reason the voting rights of the former are given specific protection while those of the latter are not. The children of Greek or Irish immigrants on the one hand, and Korean and Asian Indian immigrants on the other, are equally likely to intermarry, to go to college, and to get good jobs--except that the Asians will probably do better than the Europeans.

The key categories, to my mind, should be, first, black and other; second, foreign-born, by country, and native. One virtue of these two key distinctions is that they are less ambiguous and muddy than most others. The category of children of foreign-born is also a useful one. The effort by the new ancestry question to form a category of all persons of a specific ethnic ancestry, including those of the third generation and beyond, is for the most part a failure, as Stanley Lieberson and Mary Waters have shown in their book *From Many Strands*. It is true that among the nonblack groups some are more insular and have sharper boundaries than others. Jews were once such, but with intermarriage rates today of 50%, the degree to which they can be separated out from the white group in general is declining—part-Jews will in a generation be relatively as numerous as part-Italians, and what the significance of this "partness" will be is something that should be left to social scientists, rather than something that should bother the Census.

What then happens to various Hispanic groups, the Asian groups? The two questions—black and other, foreign-born and other—will tell us who is foreign-born from various Latin American and Asian countries, just as we know who is foreign-born from various European countries. We will know the numbers of those who are the children of the foreign-born, who are generally married to the foreign-born of the same origin. For further generations, we will assume they are all Americans, of varied ethnic and racial backgrounds, which is increasingly the reality. This approach would abandon the Hispanic category and its variants (although presumably it is politically impossible to do so). Native Americans (American Indians) have a legal definition: it is not necessary to get their numbers from the Census. It should be possible for them to distinguish them-

## A California Replication of PRRAC's Data Reconnaissance Project

**PRRAC's Federal Data Reconnaissance Project (see the lead article in the January/February *Poverty & Race*) is about to be replicated in California. With a grant from The Irvine Foundation, we will be undertaking a reconnaissance of data on state-level education, housing, income support and health programs as they impact poor and minority beneficiaries. We intend this to be model for other state versions of the research we have undertaken on the federal level, as well as for the advocacy work this research leads into.**

**If you are interested in learning more about this project, have information or information sources to suggest, or want to discuss participating in it, please contact Chester Hartman at PRRAC right away.**

selves in responding to the Census reports, but it is the legal count that should be relevant, not the inflated report of Native American or part Native American identity.

Reynolds Farley, in his contribution to the January/February *Poverty & Race* symposium, has made a heroic effort to simplify the present blooming and buzzing confusion, and to take account of the political realities that have distinguished five categories, as used in present-day affirmative action and antidiscrimination law and regulations. His effort does not take account of the many who would not want to place themselves in one of the five categories he identifies. They are the "mixed," and insist on at least two identities from among these five. They should be given a sixth line to respond to. If that is done, I would consider his approach a reasonable middle ground between the present situation, which is unsatisfactory, and the approach I suggest, in which the Census first would find out who is black, by self-identity, then who is foreign-born and from what country, and perhaps go on to find out who is the child of foreign-born parents, from what country. The special prominence given to Asian groups (presumed each to be a "race") and to Hispanic groups (presumed all to be distinctively victimized) would be abandoned. We would not even have to ask who is "mixed"—we would assume they are simply numerous among all who do not define themselves as black and/or foreign-born, for that is increasingly the reality of America.

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# Race/Ethnicity and Data Collection

by Chris Hansen

Buried in the debate begun by Lawrence Wright's provocative *New Yorker* article and continued in the January February issue of *Poverty & Race* are two extremely important and related, but nevertheless distinct, questions about the central domestic issue of our time—race. First, should we continue to collect data on the race/ethnicity of people living in the United States? Second, if we are to continue to collect those data, how should the categories be structured? The answer to the first question is easy; the second, less so.

Of course we should continue to collect data on race/ethnicity. The ACLU's Voting Rights Project uses race data every day in analyzing the impact of changes in voting rules on minority voters. Surely we can all agree that the data are needed to determine if proposed changes will have a discriminatory effect. The ACLU has used race data in school desegregation cases, most notably *Brown vs. Board of Education.* Topeka kept no race data from 1956-1966. If it hadn't started keeping those data in the 60s, we would never have been able to establish that the schools there are still not desegregated. Even more recently, as Samuel Myers suggested in his commentary, federal data on mortgage lending supplied by the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) have firmly established the existence of race discrimination in lending and helped identify those most culpable, many of whom are now being more intensively investigated for possible litigation. Because of the value of the HMDA data, the ACLU and other civil rights groups have recently urged the federal government to collect and make public additional race/ethnicity data concerning community lending and secondary market lending. Continued collection of race/ethnicity data is essential.

If we do continue to gather data on race/ethnicity, Wright raises several legitimate questions about the categories. The "one drop" rule does have a troubling racist tinge to it. In addition, civil libertarians should be concerned when the government forces an individual to accept a racial classification that that individual finds inaccurate. These problems arise because, for lawyers, the question is not whether there is any objective component to race but rather whether people are treated differently based on certain characteristics, and if so, how the law should react to that different treatment.

As many of the articles in the last *Poverty & Race* indicate, race/ethnicity is often not one-dimensional. As noted, Hispanics can be from many different races. Identity also has aspects of self-definition (do I consider myself Black?), perception (am I considered Black by others?) and treatment (am I treated as if I were Black?). These different aspects are not always congruent. (By contrast, sometimes race/ethnicity isn't even one-dimensional. A few years ago, I was probing definitions of race/ethnicity in a deposition in a case charging the New York City foster care system with racial and religious discrimination. After describing my background to the deponent—white, northern European, Protestant—I asked what ethnic group she would assign me to. She testified I didn't have an ethnicity.)

At the same time, existing civil rights laws are dependent on the ability to define limited, discrete categories of people who have been subject to prejudice and are therefore protected from further discrimination. Discrimination is not merely an act against an individual; it is also usually an act against a discrete category of individuals. That is why civil rights lawyers do not limit themselves to individual cases, but also bring class actions seeking redress for all in the protected category. If the categories become too numerous or too ill defined, they will become meaningless.

*(Please turn to page 18)*

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Perhaps one solution would be to borrow from disability law. People are protected against discrimination on the basis of disability if they are disabled or, even when they are not, if they are perceived as disabled. Perhaps people would be protected if they self-identify as Black, or if they self-identify as multi-racial or other but are perceived/ treated as Black. In any case, the difficulties of categorization should not prevent us from continuing to collect the data.

*Chris Hansen is a Senior Staff Counsel with the national office of the American Civil Liberties Union (132 W. 43rd St., New York, NY 10036). The views expressed do not necessarily represent the views of the ACLU.* □

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## More Anti-Murrayiana

In the January/February *Poverty & Race* we listed nearly three dozen reviews, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc. critical of the Murray-Herrnstein *Bell Curve* tract, with an offer to send the packet to those interested in using these materials. We received lots of responses, we're happy to report, and many of you sent in additional items, for which we are grateful. (Anne Wheelock, in a note accompanying some additional materials, asks: "Do you think readers of the PRRAC newsletter can make the next connection—to oppose *The Bell Curve* should lead to opposition to [school] tracking, but my experiences in progressive communities suggests the contrary!") The supplementary items are listed below (and were included in the packet we sent out to all who requested it). New readers who want to see the list we printed in the last issue can get one from us with a SASE. Those of you who want to have the entire enlarged packet (now some 50 items, totalling over 200 pages) should send us a 9" x 12" self-addressed envelope with $3.00 postage and $15 to cover our copying costs (now, with the additional materials, higher than the $12 we charged for the original packet).

- Carol Tavris, "The Same Rules Shape People and Tomatoes," Oct. 9, 1994 *LA Times.*
- Robert Wright, "Don't Blame Darwin," "Dumb Bell," Nov. 7, 1994 and Jan. 2, 1995 *New Republic.*
- "Measuring Intelligence: Bell, book and scandal," Dec. 24-Jan. 6 *Economist.*
- Myron Hofer, "Behind the Curve," Dec. 26, 1994 *NY Times.*
- M. Patricia Fernandez Kelly, "The Thing in the Head: Remarks on the Relationship Between Ability, Race & Social Structure" (unpub. presentation, Johns Hopkins Univ. Inst. for Policy Studies, Dec. 7, 1994).
- "The Bell Curve: Resurgence of 'Scientific' Racism"—special section of the Feb. 1995 issue of *CrossRoads* (articles by Linda Burnham, Leon Wofsy, Troy Duster & Raynard Davis).
- Edward Herman, "The New Racist Onslaught," Dec. 1994 *Z Magazine.*
- Lewis Lipsitt, "Individuals Make Up The Bell Curve," Jan. 13, 1995 *Providence Evening Bulletin.*
- Stephen Jay Gould, "Ghosts of Bell Curves Past," Feb. 1995 *Natural History.*
- "The Bell Curve: How a Dangerous Book Won Legitimacy," a *Rethinking Schools* Perspective, Winter 1994 issue.
- Beth Maschinot, "Behind the Curve," Feb. 6, 1995 *In These Times.*
- "Race: What Is It Good For?," special Nov. 1994 issue of *Discover* (articles by James Shreeve, the ubiquitous Stephen Jay Gould, Jo Ann Gutin, Christopher Wills, Jared Diamond & Juan Williams + Editorial & Reading List).
- F. Allan Hanson, "Testing, *The Bell Curve,* and the Social Construction of Intelligence"; Lee Siegel, "For Whom the Bell Curves: The New Assault on Egalitarianism," *Tikkun,* vol. 10, no. 1.
- Not included in the packet, but an important and relevant work one of our readers cited, is A. Chase, *The Social Costs of the New Scientific Racism* (Knopf, 1977).